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DURGA PUJA MESSAGE **JAMES F. MORIARTY** **U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH**

As Hindus all over the world prepare to celebrate Durga Puja, I wish to extend my heartfelt greetings to all Bangladeshis on this joyous occasion.

Durga Puja reminds us of the importance of unity. It is a time when family members and friends come together. It is a time to be with others.

The message of Durga Puja is universal -- a commitment to social justice, compassion, concern for the poor, and love of family and community. We all share a commitment to dignity and tolerance. We all share a commitment to democracy where all people have a voice. The value of wisdom is highlighted during Durga Puja. Wisdom teaches us tolerance and respect for all people and reminds us of the need to strengthen bridges between our communities, especially among all religious groups. Strength comes through respect and tolerance. Learning is another message of Durga Puja. We must continually learn from our mistakes and strive for greater knowledge and perfection. As the world grows, we must strive to protect our environment and learn to live together in peace and harmony.

May the festivities of Durga Puja bring happiness in all our lives, and inspire new beginnings based on understanding and love for all humanity. My wife, Lauren, and I wish everyone our best wishes for an auspicious Durga Puja.

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GR/ October 7, 2008